



## **COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

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## **LAMONT WESTMORELAND** ALDERMAN, 5TH DISTRICT

# **Current BOZA inconsistency and dysfunction detrimental to serving the public**

## **Statement of Alderman Lamont Westmoreland June 7, 2023**

As a new member of the Common Council, I have to say I have been greatly disappointed in my initial contacts with the city Board of Zoning Appeals (BOZA).

During the June 1 BOZA meeting, I testified my firm opposition to the request of Community Medical Services Holdings, LLC's request to occupy the premises at 7600 W. Capitol Dr. (#1) in the 5<sup>th</sup> Aldermanic District as a treatment facility for individuals who are addicted to opioids.

Interestingly, the Department of City Development (DCD) recommended approval even though their own comprehensive plan for the area discourages these types of uses. So in this case, DCD went against their own vision regarding development.

In the end, the board voted approval, and the facility will operate at the location for at least five years.

I am 100% for these treatment facilities – but in the least impacted ZIP code (53222) it is inefficient and counter-productive to place another clinic LESS than a mile from a similar facility that is opening next month (at 4757 N. 76<sup>th</sup> St.). These facilities need to be spread out further across the city, for better access and for reduced impacts on specific areas and communities.

To be clear, I respect the mission and neutrality/independence of BOZA, and it often must weigh very complex and difficult circumstances in making decisions affecting city neighborhoods. However, I believe the current administration and organization of BOZA is dysfunctional, inconsistent, inefficient, and ill-serving of the citizens of the City of Milwaukee.

While members of the Common Council can provide testimony at BOZA hearings regarding matters in their districts, that testimony is not afforded any preferential weight in BOZA cases. In other words, the elected Council member's recommendations or insights into a case are given the same consideration as the testimony of any neighbor.

I believe the BOZA structure needs a strong review to clean up their dysfunction and inconsistencies. I also support a change that would allow a greater voice for Council members in these important matters.

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